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ABSTRACT

This brief overview of counseling and guidance in Norway presents the services available to children and young people, including the school-psychological services, counseling in the schools and colleges, and the labor offices, which offer occupational guidance services. Educational requirements and functions are indicated for each of these services. (KJ)

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COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE IN NORWAY--A BRIEF SURVEY

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Counselling and guidance in Norway - a brief survey

Counselling and guidance is part of the service and assistance provided by several public institutions and agencies. School, Health service and Labour offices have developed counselling and guidance functions on different levels in the context of their own field of work. The following is a short presentation of some such services, especially those available to children and young people in this country.

The school-psychological service (Skolepsykologiske kontorer, Pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste) was established in 1947 when the first office was opened in Oslo. In 1977 there were 187 such offices at work, largely one in every municipality in the country. The teams - school-psychologist, social worker, remedial teacher and office staff - cover a normal school-population of about 3000. It follows then that some municipalities have many such teams, in Oslo there are 30, whereas some districts may have only one, dependent on the number of school-children in the municipality. The main tasks of the school-psychological teams are: observing and diagnosing children referred to them from schools and parents; in cooperation with the teachers, working out individual programmes for children with different types of learning difficulties and behaviour problems; counselling with parents and teachers. An important goal is: to try to make a place in his/her local school for as many handicapped children as possible (see Education Act of 1969). In the early years the service covered children/young people from 7 - 14 years of age, then from 7 to 16. It is now extended to pre-school children "in special need of help and support".

A school psychologist (pedagogisk-psykologisk rådgiver) has a university degree in psyhology or education, based on 5-6 years of studies. A social worker has a three-year post graduate course in a College of Social Work. The remedial teachers' qualifications are: teacher training and an advanced training course (1 or 2 years) in special education.

The Labour Offices (Arbeidskontorer) are organized in one central head office (fylkesarbeidskontor) in every county with branch offices in the municipalities. On the staff are vocational guidance officers (yrkesrettleiere), some of whom will be assigned to special service for the school and the school-leavers. Others will deal mainly with young adults seeking work.
Other functions of the Labour offices will be: rehabilitation and retraining, special assistance to young people with limited job opportunities. In addition, new projects and programmes are tried out in connection with youth unemployment.

The "field-workers" have good educational background and training courses relevant to their functions in the Labour offices. Of course people from several professions are employed within this administrative framework: Labour exchange, Vocational Guidance, Rehabilitation (medical staff, social workers, psychologists etc.).

Counselling in schools (sosialpedagogisk tjeneste/rådgiving). All children in the country (in fact 99,6 %) attend compulsory, co-educational state schools. The basic school (grunnskolen) includes a lower level, from the 1st to the 6th form (barneskolen) and an upper level from the 7th to the 9th form (ungdomsskolen). As children start school in the year of their seventh birthday, the school-leavers will be 15-16 years old.

Compulsory schools for all (folkeskolen) from the 1st to the 7th form was established by an Education Act of 1889. In 1959 the decision about the extension up to the 9th form was made by the Storting (Parliament). School-counselling was introduced as a part of this new type of school, which encompasses nearly all adolescents up to 16.

This new school represented a challenge and called for added resources, also in personell, in order to meet the specific needs of this age group. In the first place because: in the upper level pupils/students have to face a series of choices concerning courses, subjects and levels. They will also have

to begin their planning for the future. It is implicit that every pupil is entitled to relevant and well planned information about the different ways and alternatives open to him/her. In addition individual counselling is needed to help adjust decisions to individual interests, needs and resources. To facilitate these processes, in co-operation with parents and teachers, is one of the important functions of the school-counsellor.

Secondly: adolescence is a critical phase of life in most societies in our world. Young people are subject to conflicting pressures and influences. To find one's own way is difficult, not unproblematic for most young people. To be available to all the pupils for individual contacts concerning age-typical and temporary questions and problems, is another vital function for the school-counsellor.

Lastly: for some young people this phase is characterized by more serious personal problems, often latent during childhood. The counsellor is supposed to develop a network of communication and contacts with outside agencies, dealing with psychiatric diagnosing and treatment. Such assistance is provided by The National Health Service, by Social Welfare, by the school system itself through the school-psychological offices and by some voluntary organizations. An important function for the counsellor is then to know and be able to make use of these outside agencies and make them available to pupils in special need of expert help.

There are school-councellors in all upper-level schools (ungdomsskoler). A teaching post at this stage is 24 hours per week. A counsellor can reserve a minimum of 1 hour pr. 25 pupils for counselling. It follows then that in a small school, few hours are set aside for counselling - in large schools it may be the major part of a teaching post. In principle all counsellors will combine teaching and counselling. The conditions for employment as counsellors are not quite clear, but will be different in different municipalities, some school boards have made better conditions for counselling than others.

The only formal qualification for the counselling function

is teacher training from a teachers training college or from university. Several training courses have been provided to meet the needs felt by most counsellors for more specific preparation for counselling functions, not covered by our present teacher training. Some of these have been week-end courses, some in-service-training has lasted one or two terms. Two teacher training colleges have an advanced counselling course, lasting one year. The participation in courses is voluntary for teachers. School authorities may or may not consider such factors when employing teacher/counsellors.

The Further Education Colleges (videregående skole) represent a co-ordination - within one system - of a whole range of courses of study on college level. This new type of college, introduced in 1974, includes a number of already existing schools and colleges ("academic", grammar school, commercial schools, apprentice schools, arts and craft colleges, technical schools. In addition new alternatives will be tried - for instance a course of basic nursing and health care is suggested. The range and possibility of choices and combinations is even wider than those of the basic school. In principle all school-leavers (16 years old) have a right to three years of further education with a choice of levels and subjects etc.

The reasons for introducing a counselling service in the upper level of the basic school are on the whole valid also for The Further Education Colleges. Counselling in the colleges is in fact organized in a similar way. Counselling in the colleges of further education are adjusted to the slightly different character of a voluntary school and a different age group, young people from 16 to 19-20 years of age.

The Universities provide a guidance service (studentveiledning): information and guidance concerning subjects, courses etc. and combinations of these. The service is given by officers with degrees from the relevant faculties (medicine, social sciences, science, languages etc.)
Psychological/psychiatric counselling is provided by the Students Health Service (studentenes helsetjeneste).